YOUTH NEWSLETTER

No. 5 October, 1981

Special issue:

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

EDITORS' NOTES

"What is going on in our village? Who are all these strange foreigners walking around in the shops?" Questions like these were puzzling the inhabitants of a small town called Urach in the south of the Federal Republic of Germany during the last week of July. You could tell from the looks on their faces that they had never expected to see so many Africans or Asians in their small town. These young people from far away were part of the participants of an International Youth Consultation organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The participants came from all over the world and represented about 40 of the LWF member churches. It was the first meeting of this kind--with such a specific mandate and large participation--under the auspices of the LWF.The purpose of the consultation was not only getting to know other youth,their cultural background and problems, but also to come up with specific recommendations on how the LWF can structure its youth work.

This special edition of the Youth Newsletter is meant to inform about some of the things that happened at the consultation and about the results. Most of the stories were written by the editors but we have tried to include as many articles from participants as possible.

It is necessary to explain the idea or goals of this consultation more in detail.Before doing so it might be useful to know that the LWF has never had a youth department or a full-time youth secretary before. The Commission on Church Cooperation--a kind of governing committee for the department of church cooperation between two assemblies--at its annual meeting this year decided to establish the position of a youth desk in its department. One of the tasks of the youth consultation was to approve this decision and to give some guidelines for the structure of this desk. Other tasks, again involving structures, were to draw up plans for a pre-assembly youth gathering 1984 in Budapest,Hungary, and to evaluate the ongoing work of the LWF, e.g. the youth internship program.

You will probably be wondering if there was only structural business going on at the consultation. Apart from recreation nights and long personal conversations the participants also tried to focus on burning issues facing them in their own context and on global youth concerns.

If you have any comments or articles which you would like to contribute to the Youth Newsletter, we would appreciate if you send them to the following address:

Lutheran World Federation
Department of Church Cooperation
150, route de Ferney
CH-1211 Geneva 20

Responsible editors for this edition: Tsan-lu Shu
Julius Paul
Matthias Schmale

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VISITATION PROGRAM WAS A SUCCESS

by Tsan-lu Shu

"They have taken care of me in every detail until I could not ask for anything more." "I was encouraged to be an active part of the family." These are comments made by some of the consultation participants on a one-week visitation program which took place prior to the International Youth Consultation.

27 of the participants took part in this visitation program which was organized by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria.As the participants reported, they were warmly received by the local congregations and their host families. They did not only experience the daily life of German families but also had the chance to share some information about the life and mission of the churches in the countries they come from.

Some of them also took the opportunity to, as they said, correct some of the information and views which their hosts had about countries far away from them. A young man from Papua New Guinea said he was shocked when he heard from his hosts that in Papua New Guinea a lot of pigs are raised in the house and that women breast-feed the baby pigs. "What a lie that is and what a disgrace to the women of my country," he said.

A general observation made was that West German youth are alienated from the church because they are rebelling against traditions and do not find a meaning in the worships and services of the church. Some participants said they had the impression that the activities and programs organized by the church do not meet the demands of the youth and are not relevant for their lives.

Another observation made was that there is little moral or ethical teaching in the church. Instead the churches are tolerant about many social issues rather than being critical, the participants said.

Many were very much impressed by German hospitality. All the young people expressed that it was not only a very interesting but also a learning experience.

* * *

'TIME WILL HEAL THE WOUNDED'

Impressions by Sheila Fay Small, USA, on her visitation program in West Germany.

.....those words stuck in my mind because they were on a poster made by a youth. There is little suffering existing in West Germany. Youth want to express themselves as they feel and not as society or adults expect them to. They are a voice crying out and being ignored. People do not hear what they say or feel. Most posters made by youth spoke about freedom and liberation.

I spent three happy hours talking and singing with them. They are very gifted and talented. The favorite song among us was "Go down Moses". This is a song about struggle and suffering. "Do not love war" was their mission. We laughed and had a good time. It was sad to leave. The bond we built in such a short span of time can never be broken.

Youth are experiencing a struggle that is not only within themselves but also outside. I foresee that time will heal the wounded. It may come after they have gone to the streets to make their grievances known. Families must be strong and must have the understanding to cope with what they do not yet understand.

May peace be with you, youth.....

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CONSULTATION SUPPORTS YOUTH DESK, RECOMMENDS YOUTH COMMISSIONERS

by Matthias Schmale

Guidelines and purposes for a youth desk at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and a call for a youth commissioner on each LWF commission were among recommendations made to the LWF by the International Youth Consultation, which met in Urach, Fed. Republic of Germany, July 24-31. The consultation also came up with proposals for a youth meeting to be held prior to the LWF's Seventh Assembly in Budapest 1984.

Stating that "experiences so far have clearly shown that youth needs cannot be effectively met in the LWF without a full-time staff person responsible for them," participants at the consultation strongly supported the decision taken at the LWF Commission on Church Cooperation meeting in June to establish the position of a youth assistant in the department of church cooperation.

(M O R E)

Also recommended by the consultation was a working committee to assist the youth desk in preparing the pre-assembly youth meeting. Among purposes of a youth desk, outlined in the consultation's final report, are to assist member churches in their youth work, to facilitate coordination of youth work on a regional and international level and to cooperate with the World Council of Churches Sub-Unit on Youth and other ecumenical organizations.

Evaluating the participation of youth resource persons at commission meetings over the last years, the consultation noted that this form of participation has not made effective input into the work of the commissions. Each of the four departments of the LWF has a commission, which is a governing committee between assemblies. Until now two new youth delegates were at each annual commission meeting. It was recommended that the Executive Committee appoint one youth member--in addition to the present commissioners--to each commission and to the Executive Committee.

According to participants in the consultation, a six-day pre-assembly youth meeting would provide an opportunity to prepare youth delegates and observers for effective participation in the assembly. Recommended in this connection was that 25 percent of the official assembly delegates should be youth. The assembly is the highest decision-making body of the LWF, with its 97 member churches comprising 54 million people.

Since the pre-assembly meeting is to take place in Hungary, it would provide a special opportunity for Eastern European youth to meet many young Christians from the rest of the world and thus half the participants should be from Eastern Europe, the final report says. In his address, Dr.Carl Mau, LWF general secretary, had encouraged the participants to come up with concrete plans for the pre-assembly meeting.

Based on the very positive experiences of the visitation program in Bavaria (See also story on page 3) the consultation suggested examining possibilities of organizing a similar visitation program in the churches of Eastern Europe for the participants in the pre-assembly youth meeting.

Five of the people gathered in Urach went on to Finland to present the consultation's final report to the Executive Committee which met there August 5-13.

The question of how youth can be defined in terms of age sparked a long and lively discussion. There was a big difference of opinion between representatives from Western countries and representatives from the so-called Third World. The participants finally agreed, taking different cultural backgrounds into consideration, that the age limit for youth should be below 30 and in exceptional cases up to 35. * * *

(NOTE: The final report will be available on request from the LWF's
Department of Church Cooperation
150, route de Ferney
CH-1211 Geneva 20)

YOUTH MATTERS APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A series of resolutions on youth concerns were accepted by the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Executive Committee at its meeting this year in Turku, Finland in August. Responding to recommendations made by the five youth delegates, the Executive Committee voted to ask each LWF commission to appoint one youth to serve as adviser on a regular basis until the 1984 Assembly. The system of youth advisers will also apply to the Executive Committee itself.

Also approved was a pre-assembly youth gathering that would both prepare youth delegates to the 1984 Budapest Assembly and provide a forum for youth concerns. The pre-assembly meeting would be held in Eastern Europe to assure broad participation from that area. Previously Eastern European youth have had difficulties in obtaining permits to attend youth meetings in the West.

The Executive Committee welcomed the news that the recent youth consultation in Urach, Federal Republic of Germany (See story on page 4), had accepted the Church Cooperation Commission's proposal for a youth desk in the LWF to coordinate youth matters.

The Executive Committee, comprising 30 members, is the governing committee for the LWF in the time between two assemblies.

(Lutheran World Information)

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COMMENT: Youth consultation mixed success

by Susanne Kasch
(Susanne, a former LWF youth intern, was a youth representative at this year's LWF Executive Committee.)

The main task of the International Youth Consultation, held in Urach in July under the auspices of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), was to restructure the youth work of the LWF. Apart from giving clear recommendations for a full-time youth secretary, a permanent youth representation at commission meetings and an advisory committee for youth concerns, the participants also dealt with basic questions and problems of youth throughout the world.

One might expect that 40 young people from all over the world, brought together for 10 days to discuss their problems, would provide enough dynamite to shake an international organization like the LWF to its roots. But what would surely have been revolutionary 10 years ago, was in Urach an extremely peaceful matter. Maybe too peaceful. There may be a number of reasons for this. One of the reasons surely was that the main task of the consultation--to give guidelines for the structure of youth work in the LWF--is not necessarily a subject that stimulates discussions.

(M O R E)

To me it seems more decisive that in contrast to the youth of the '60s and the early '70s the youth represented in Urach no longer have guiding and motivating goals. They rather seem to feel encircled by problems. Thus topics discussed in detail in Urach were the alienation of youth from church and society, unemployment and educational problems, questions of human relationships like "marriage--yes or no," divorce and the difficulties of family life. And as far as analyses of problems are concerned I think the participants did quite a good job. One working group focused on the relationship between youth and church and on a critical analysis of worship and the church as an institution. It tried to explain why so many young people are leaving the church.

Another group looked at the relationship between youth and society and criticized the me-first mentality that is common among youth in industrial countries. They also pointed to the retreat of many young people into a private and intact world and to the disinterest in political questions that is spreading among youth.

The participants did not find equivalent solutions for all these problems. This could be clearly seen in the regional reports. In the course of the consultation the participants of different regions (Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and Africa) met to describe the situations in their respective areas. And here the reports of the Europeans and Americans read like long problem catalogs. The group reports of Asia and Africa are a little different. They focus on the subject of evangelism with the attempt to develop mission strategies and educating people for this.

But--and this was one of the main problems of the consultation--the Asian and African questions had little influence on the course of the consultation. Structure and arrangement of the meeting and of course also the language once again favored the Americans and Europeans who dominated too much. Even the daily devotions were held in a Western style, which is also common in the LWF.

The success of such a consultation cannot be measured by the sum of its results. It seems much more important to me that, at such an international consultation, in meeting youth of different cultural backgrounds and other political and social situations, one gets the experience that the world is much bigger and more complex than can be seen from one's own town or village. It is a learning experience about the diversity and complexity of the world. At this meeting of young Christians it also became clear what binds us through all diversity.

To me the most important result of this consultation was the clear commitment of the participants to the ecumenical movement. Intensifying LWF youth work is not happening for the self-interest of the Lutheran churches, but as a contribution to ecumenism.

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International Youth Consultation 1981

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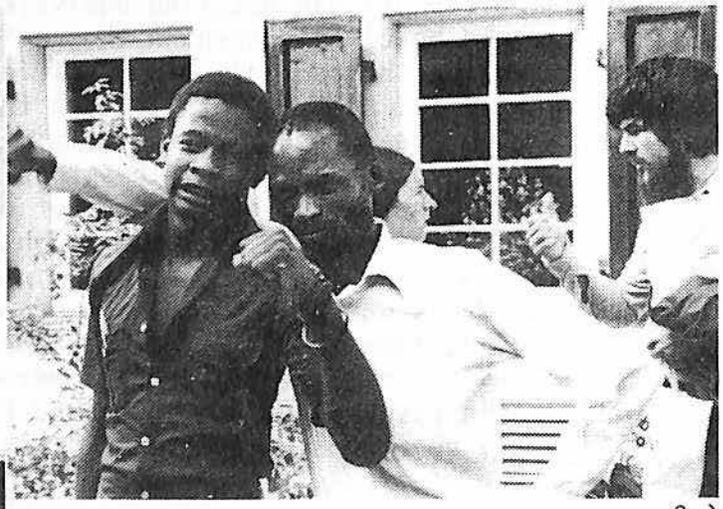

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PHOTO CAPTIONS : 1981 LWF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

(held in Stift Urach,Fed.Republic of Germany, July 24- 31.)

1. What are you staring at, Ladies and Gentlemen? --Delegates shown represent (from left) Indonesia, South Africa, Guyana, Philippines and and again Indonesia.

2. A big African from Liberia talking to a small American from Chigago.

3. Timothy Chere from South Africa, posing here with Paul Kahorere from Namibia, had a big impact on the meeting.

4. The Bible studies were prepared by Rev. Terry Simonson from Canada. After a short introduction the participants split up into groups and shared views and comments about a given text.

5. Apart from working hard the participants also had some fun on a few nights playing games.

6. One of the few good singers was Peter Debra from Guyana (with guitar). He not only had a powerful voice but could also play the guitar very well.

7. The international dinner was a big success. You should have seen the mess in the kitchen after the participants had cooked their respective dishes.

8. One of the fun games was to pass an apple on to somebody else without using your hands.

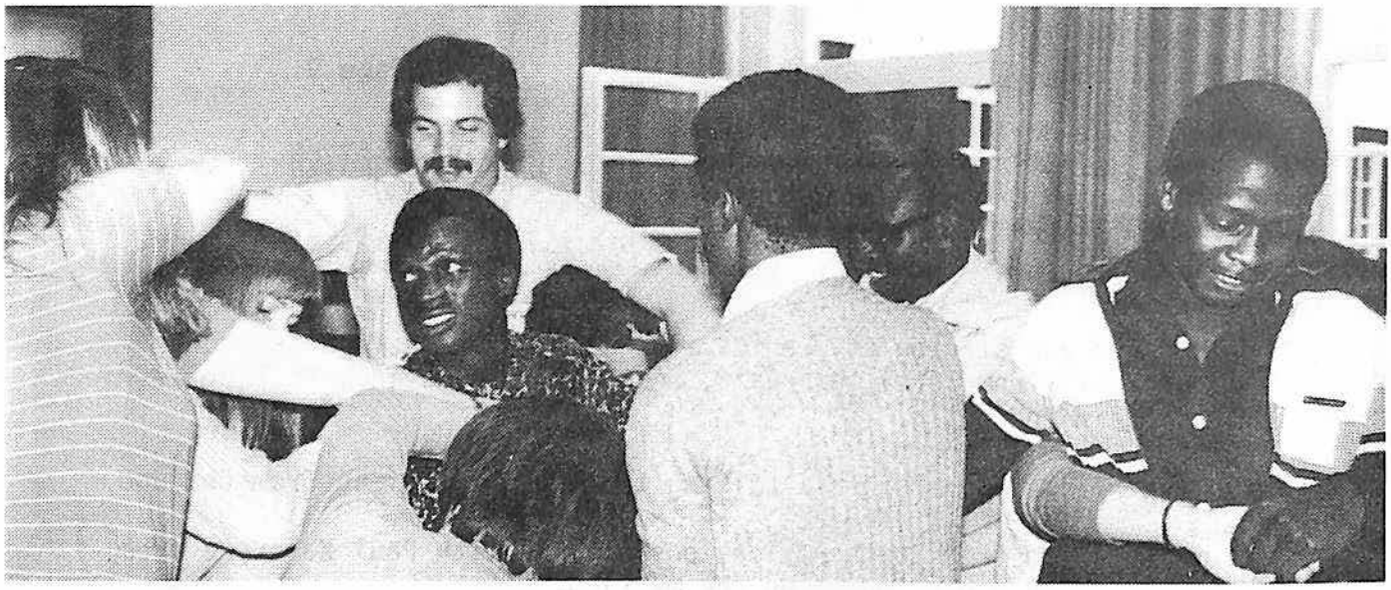
9. The worship was held in a Western style. There were few experiments and when there were any, e.g. clown services, a lot of participants, especially from the Third World, reacted negatively.

* * *

These and other photos can be obtained from:

Christa Rothenbühler
Information Bureau, LWF
Rte. de Ferney 150
P.O. Box 66

CH - 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland



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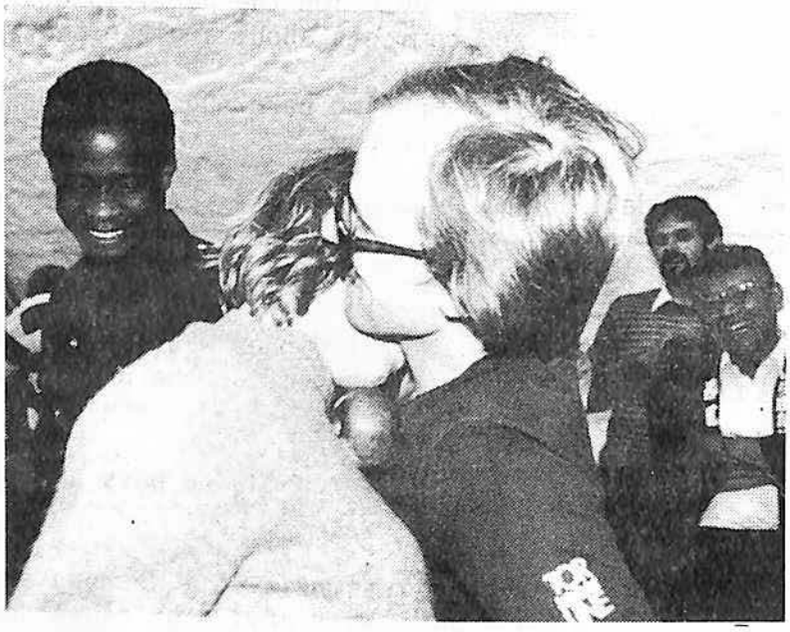

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SOME THOUGHTS BY THE ORGANIZER

by Julius Paul

How do I organize an international meeting where all regional groups can participate equally and where the outcome of the meeting is not dominated by one group? Would, in a world where political and economic decisions are largely made by the so-called First World, this trend also influence the course of the consultation? How do I encourage people to share their feelings and thoughts freely even though English is not their mother tongue and they have a lack of adequate education ? How do I enable people who are not used to Western ways of running a meeting to use these ways to get their concerns across? -- This was my anxiety both before and during the meeting.

After the seven-day visitation program in the southern part of the Federal Republic of Germany, the participants stormed into "Stift Urach." There was much laughter and excitement and I felt that people were ready for work. Credit must be given to the visitation program as it brought the participants together.

The delegates worked hard. They followed the time-table very carefully even though it was maybe too structured to leave room for any kind of flexibility. We missed hearing reports from participants about their life and work in their churches. We could have had first-hand information about the situation in Poland, South Africa, Namibia and Latin America.

The presence of WCC Youth Director Peter Moss added a new dimension to our meeting. In a slide-presentation we were reminded that church youth work does not only include church youth but also other groups of young people, be they refugees, school drop-outs or drug-addicts.

In terms of structural recommendations the consultation was a big success. We not only approved a youth desk, but also asked for an advisory committee and youth commissioners. We also came up with plans for a pre-assembly youth meeting 1984 in Budapest.

The question that comes to my mind is that, now the meeting is over, what happens ? Now we have the possibility to express our views on various issues. We have been given a rightful place and now have to try and find ways of speaking out. I leave the Lutheran World Federation with the hope that there will be persons, young people, who will present their problems and burning issues and who will be brave enough to fight for their rights.

* * *

2 PIONEERS OF INTERNSHIP PROGRAM LEAVE LWF

Julius Paul and Tsan-lu Shu have left the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) after an eight-month stay in Geneva. Tsan-lu was attached to the information bureau of the LWF's department of communication. She was involved in various aspects of this bureau's work, including the editing of newsletters, translations from her native Chinese into English, writing occasional pieces for publication and checking and distributing incoming news material.

Communication Department Director Marc Chambron said, "Tsan-lu has a pleasant personality. Her willingness to help, her concern for persons and human relationships have been very greatly appreciated by all who have come in contact with her. My colleagues join me in wishing her every good fortune in the future."

Tsan-lu goes back to her home country Taiwan, where she formerly worked for Taosheng Publishing House in Taipei. She is a member of the Taiwan Lutheran Church.

Julius Paul, a Lutheran pastor from Malaysia, was responsible for youth and student work in the LWF's department of church cooperation. Julius, a 36-year-old "youth," said that "my presence served as a reminder that the LWF has to take youth work seriously."

Risto Lehtonen, director of the department of church cooperation, gave Youth Newsletter the following statement:
"Thank you, Julius. It is with a mixture of gratitude and sadness that the department saw you leave Geneva at the end of August to go back to your home church and country. Your assignment in the LWF began as that of a youth intern and ended up as a temporary staff member for most of the time. In fact you functioned as a youth assistant. The planning for leadership training programs for youth and students, the communication between youth constituencies of Lutheran churches, the youth presence at LWF meetings and also at the headquarters received a real boost through your work. Yet the most visible and far-reaching project which you helped to organize was the International Youth Consultation in Germany this July. With your help the LWF has made a big step in involving young people in its work and in serving youth of LWF member churches.

Au revoir, Julius, and Godspeed."

The LWF Executive Committee had approved the internship program at its annual meeting in 1978. With this approval the Executive Committee implemented one of the actions of the Sixth Assembly in Dar es Salaam in 1977 to give priority to youth concerns. Susanne Kasch from the Federal Republic of Germany was the first intern in the official program. She spent eight months in the department of studies in 1980. She was followed by Julius and Tsan-lu. (See photo on next page)

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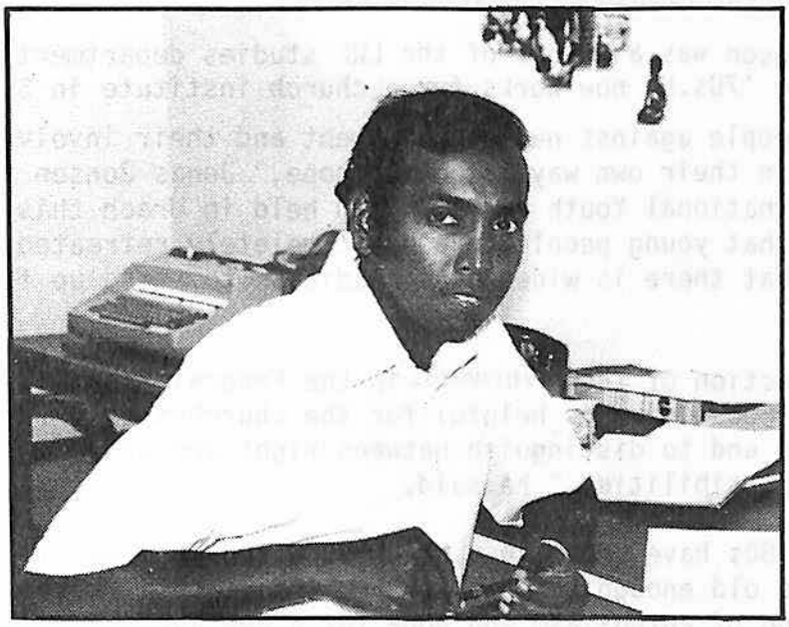

Rev. Julius Paul

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PERSONALIA :

.....The first official youth assistant will take up his position in early October. He is Alf Idland from the Lutheran Church of Norway. Alf spent several years in the overseas service as a missionary in the Norwegian Missionary Society in Japan, where he served as pastor of the Tezukayama Lutheran Church and Student Center of the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church in Osaka. In 1978 Alf visited Lutheran churches in South East Asia and East Africa and made an extensive survey of their youth ministry for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Alf was a member of the organizing committee for the recently held International Youth Consultation in Urach.....

.....Hans Christoph Hermes from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover will be the next LWF youth intern. Hans Christoph, a student of theology, will spend a major portion of his time involved in various tasks in the general secretariat. In particular he will assist with the evaluation of some specified German theological and general literature.He is expected to arrive in the first week of October.....

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'YOUTH PROTESTS ARE SIGNS OF HOPE'

(NOTE: Jonson was a member of the LWF studies department in the '70s. He now works for a church institute in Sweden.)

"The protests of young people against nuclear armament and their involvement in peace movements are, in their own way, signs of hope," Jonas Jonson told participants at the International Youth Consultation held in Urach this July. He said, "They indicate that young people have not completely retreated into the private; they show that there is widespread readiness to stand up for dignity and the future."

Jonson noted that the reaction of the government in the Federal Republic of Germany and in many other countries is helpful for the churches. "It forces them to clarify positions and to distinguish between right and wrong in Lutheran division of responsibilities," he said.

According to Jonson, the '80s have begun in a somewhat unexpected way in Europe. "Those of us who are old enough to have marched the streets in the '60s and who have seen the wind of enthusiasm and hope for a new and more just world order fall by the wayside, hardly expected new youth movements of real significance to emerge," he said. Jonson continued, "We had seen too much youthful faith traded for cynicism and despair. We had seen whole societies manipulated into the idolatry of economic growth. We had seen the alternatives offered to young people: adaptation or alienation. Authentic renewal and change seemed to be opted out."

He pointed to the anti-nuclear movement "threatening established politicians," to the mobilization of people for protecting the environment, on the new and significant rôle women are playing and to the far-reaching political shifts in many countries, such as Poland and France, that came with the '80s. Jonson said "In some respects we may now be harvesting fruits of what was sown twenty years ago."

Jonson based his paper on three presuppositions. The first one was that it is quite natural if young people "experience alienation in a society based on maximization of profit for the few, on peace through threat and on concentration of power." The second one was that "young people with fresh eyes and warm hearts could help the church to rediscover her own sources in the gospel and get away from the kind of theology which serves as afterthought and legitimizing of the prevailing systems." The third was that young people are being robbed of their future by shortsighted politics.

Referring to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Jonson said that "it is the fruit of an old concept of ecumenism." "It is an organization with interests to defend, it is governed by old traditions and mostly rather old men," he said. According to Jonson, the LWF and its member churches badly need young people to build the bridge to the future. He urged the participants to carefully look at the rôle they can play and "at different ways to use an organization like the LWF for promoting wholeness and health, participation and unity, peace and justice, in short for implementing the gospel in our different situations."

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